



Exploring Farming Styles: Analysis of an Austrian Farmers' Journal, 1950s-1980s*

Paper to the conference Rural History 2010 in Brighton/GB, September 13-16, 2010

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I. Introduction

This article has evolved from a research project following a micro-level approach to the postwar 'agricultural revolution'. Above all, it focuses on the *diversity* of post-1945 agricultural development, i.e. the various ways farming actors experienced, interpreted and acted upon the natural and societal structures of their rural lifeworlds, thereby reproducing and/or transforming the local, regional and supra-regional agrosystems they were embedded in.¹ This investigation follows the approach of *farming styles* which has evolved from actor-network theory² as well as the

* This article is based on the research project P20922-G15 financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). Further information is available on the project website at <http://www.univie.ac.at/ruralhistory/farmingstyles.htm>. I would like to thank Ernst Langthaler for the great support he has provided to this paper. I am also grateful to Rita Garstenauer, Sophie Kickingner and Alexander Mejstrik for comments on earlier versions of this paper.

¹ As a programmatic outline of this actor-centred approach to rural history see Ernst Langthaler, *Agrarsysteme ohne Akteure? Sozialökonomische und sozialökologische Modelle in der Agrargeschichte*, in: Andreas Dix / idem (eds.), *Grüne Revolutionen. Agrarsysteme und Umwelt im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Jahrbuch für Geschichte des ländlichen Raumes 3), Innsbruck et al. 2006, 216-238.

² See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford 2005, 247-262.

empirically evident diversity of farming.³ Accordingly, farming styles are internally coherent and externally distinctive ‘modes of ordering’⁴ of farming systems.⁵ They comprise symbolic, social and material elements: at the symbolic level, formal and informal *rules* (instructions, ideals, customs etc.) about how farming is (not) to be done; at the social level, more or less hierarchical *relations* between farming actors and others (members of cooperatives, extension officers, upstream and downstream industries etc.); at the material level, a broad range of *resources* (land, labour, machinery etc.) applied to agroecosystems. These elements are being interconnected in different ways – even in similar structural settings – through the practice of farming, thereby creating a variety of farming styles as ‘socio-technical networks’.⁶ In this paper, I focus on the *symbolic* level, i.e. the discourses mediated by the agrarian press; however, it is closely connected with a parallel study focusing on the material level, i.e. the resources applied to agroecosystems.⁷ Moreover, both papers are complemented by a subsequent study covering also the social level, e.g. the lifeworlds of interviewees working and living in farming systems in our regions of reference. By integration of the findings of these three investigations, the complexity of farming styles in postwar Austria shall be explored.⁸

This paper aims at exploring discursive facets of farming styles by analysing a popular Austrian farmers’ journal from the 1950s to the 1980s, the agrarian weekly *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* or, in short, *Bauernbündler*.⁹ I attempt to (re-)construct ‘symbolic orders’¹⁰ as being

³ See Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, *Rural Sociology and the New Agrarian Question. A Perspective from the Netherlands*, in: *Sociologia Ruralis* 33 (1993), 240-260.

⁴ On the distinction between (static) ‘order’ and (dynamic) ‘ordering’ see John Law, *Organizing Modernity*, Oxford / Cambridge 1994.

⁵ For an introduction to farming systems research see John S. Caldwell, *Farming Systems*, in: Charles J. Arntzen / Ellen M. Ritter (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Agricultural Science*, vol. 2, San Diego et al. 1994, 129-138.

⁶ For a theoretical outline and an empirical application of the farming styles concept see Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, *The Virtual Farmer. Past, Present and Future of the Dutch Peasantry*, Assen 2003, 101-141. For a critical assessment see Frank Vanclay et al., *The Social and Intellectual Construction of Farming Styles: Testing Dutch Ideas in Australian Agriculture*, in: *Sociologia Ruralis* 46 (2006), 61-82.

⁷ See Rita Garstenauer / Sophie Kickingier / Ernst Langthaler, *Exploring Farming Styles: Analysis of Farm Records in Two Austrian Regions, 1945–1980s*, paper to the conference Rural History 2010 in Brighton/GB, September 13-16, 2010, http://www.univie.ac.at/ruralhistory/RH2010_Garstenauer-Kickingier-Langthaler.pdf.

⁸ For an outline of the research project see Rita Garstenauer / Sophie Kickingier / Ernst Langthaler / Ulrich Schwarz, *Landwirtschaftsstile in Niederösterreich zwischen 1940er und 1980er Jahren – ein Forschungsprojekt*, in: *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur* 54 (2010), 86-99.

⁹ This title indicates a member of the Peasant Federation (*Bauernbund*); thus, it could be translated by ‘peasant federate’.

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede. Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft*, Frankfurt am Main, 284.

inscribed into public discourses. As farming was perceived and evaluated particularly by those who worked and lived on the farms, mass medial representations can be read as indicators of prevalent patterns of perception and evaluation. In Lower Austria in the post-war era, the *Bauernbündler* was the most widely distributed farmers' journal.¹¹ But the selection of this weekly has been not only a matter of quantity, but also one of quality: Its particular content fits perfectly to the aim of my research module. As the *Bauernbündler* was a central organ of agricultural policy, an agricultural trade journal as well as a popular magazine for the rural population, it lets us explore the intersection of political, economic and cultural issues of farming. It conveys ideas about 'how farming should be done', 'how to run a farm properly', 'how to live a good life' and so forth.

The ambition of the journal to cover the totality of agricultural issues also becomes obvious in its self-description as the 'most important voice of the Austrian peasantry'¹², a 'loyal companion and mentor of every true farm family'¹³, a source of 'matters of political and economical importance'¹⁴. The editors put it in a nutshell: 'Those who read the *Bauernbündler* will never miss anything of significance'.¹⁵ This fairly 'totalitarian' ambition reflects the relations of production of this journal: The *Bauernbündler* was published by the Lower Austrian Peasant Federation (*Niederösterreichischer Bauernbund*), a sub-organisation of the Catholic-conservative Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*). This context cannot be overestimated: The mandataries of the Peasants' Alliance not only dominated the official representation of rural interests, the Chamber of Agriculture (*Landwirtschaftskammer*). Its multi-functionaries were also overrepresented in the bodies of the densely interlinked rural cooperatives and associations.¹⁶ In short, the *Bauernbündler* was part of a powerful apparatus – contemporaries euphemistically talked

¹¹ See Gottfried Schuh, *Die Agrarpresse der Republik Österreich von 1918-1968*, doctoral thesis at the University of Vienna, Vienna 1969; Bernd Semrad, *Printmedien*. in: Peter Melichar / Ernst Langthaler / Stefan Eminger (eds.), *Niederösterreich im 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. 3: *Kultur*, Vienna / Cologne / Weimar 2008, 47-74; Harald Michalek, *Vom fleißigen Bauern zum erfolgreichen Betriebsinhaber. Bauerntumsideologischer Diskurs der politischen Interessensvertretung Österreichischer Bauernbund in ihrem publizistischen Organ 1945-1955*, master thesis at the University of Salzburg, Salzburg 1998.

¹² *Niederösterreichischer Bauernbund Kalender 1952*, Vienna 1951, 51.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *Niederösterreichischer Bauernbund Kalender 1953*, Vienna 1952, 48.

¹⁶ See Josef Krammer, *Analyse einer Ausbeutung*, vol. 2: *Bewußtsein der Bauern in Österreich*, Vienna 1976, 23-34; Ernst Langthaler, *Nabe und entfernte Verwandtschaft. Agrar-Korporativismus in Niederösterreich*, in: Stefan Eminger / idem (eds.), *Niederösterreich im 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1: *Politik*, Vienna / Cologne / Weimar 2008, 687-710.

about the ‘three columns’ of agriculture (the Peasants’ Alliance, the Chamber of Agriculture and the cooperative system)¹⁷ – within the regulatory framework of the Austrian agrosystem.

In order to explore the entire net of symbolic relations inscribed into the journal, the multi-variate technique of *Multiple Correspondence Analysis* (MCA) in combination with quantitative and qualitative content analysis has been applied to the textual data.¹⁸ To handle the enormous amount of material to a manageable level, a reduced text corpus has been created. Basically two conditions have determined the building of this corpus: representativeness with respect to the distribution of contents in the course of time and at one moment in time. Hence, the volumes 1950, 1958, 1969 and 1981 have been chosen in correspondence with the years of the farm surveys analysed in a corresponding project module.¹⁹ Furthermore, three articles out of each weekly issue occupying dominant positions in the departments of the journal have been selected.²⁰ In terms of MCA, these articles are taken as individual cases, positioned within a multi-dimensional space according to the (dis-)similarities of their features (i.e. variables). The analysed set of features comprises lexical, grammatical, stylistic and typographic data and metadata of the texts (position in the issue, date of publication, author etc.).

By application of MCA to the textual data, the relations of the official agrarian discourse become observable within in a field. Following Michel Foucault, I call this network of discursive relations a *discursive field*.²¹ This field is ordered by the diverse, but limited ways statements can come into existence. Thus, the discursive field not only lets us explore relations between statements. It also reveals the rules of their formation, governing the limited possibilities to make sense.²² In the discursive field of ‘strategic possibilities’²³ different perspectives on the world as it

¹⁷ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 14 (1969), 12.

¹⁸ See Frédéric Lebaron, *Pierre Bourdieu: Economic models against economism*, in: *Theory and Society*, 32 (2003), 551-565, here 559; Ludovic Lebart / André Salem / Lisette Berry, *Exploring Textual Data*, Dordrecht 1998; Henry Rouanet / Werner Ackermann / Brigitte Le Roux, *The Geometric Analysis of Questionnaires: the Lesson of Bourdieu's La Distinction*, in: *Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique* 65 (2000), 5-18; Gisèle Sapiro, *The literary field between the state and the market*, in: *Poetics* 31 (2003) 441-464.

¹⁹ See Garstenauer / Kickingner / Langthaler, *Exploring*.

²⁰ The *Bauernbündler* is divided into three departments: a first department covering the first three pages, which deals mainly with agricultural policy; a second department located in the rear part, that provides professional news and practical information such as advises, guidelines or annonces (‘*Relevant to our farmers*’); and a third department in the middle addressing rural women (‘*For the farmer's wife*’).

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Archäologie des Wissens*, Frankfurt am Main 1981, 43 f.; Michel Foucault, *Réponse au Cercle d'epistemologie*, in: *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* 9 (1968), 9-40; see also Frédéric Lebaron, *Exploring fields. Recent trends in French sociology*, in: *Sociologisk Årbok* 13/2 (1998), 1-16.

²² Foucault, *Archäologie*, 106 f.

²³ Foucault, *Archäologie*, 56.

‘is’ or ‘might be’ compete with another, on the one hand.²⁴ On the other hand, this field comprises different positions from where these perspectives become meaningful, from where a specific logic – a particular way of articulating²⁵ – must be applied in order to understand how discursive objects belong to each other. These positions, from which discourses make sense, have to be adopted by those who identify themselves with particular worldviews (and, thus, differentiate themselves from other views) the discourse creates. Consequently, a discourse does not create meaning until subjects who understand the world in a similar way have *subjected* themselves to its ‘mode of ordering’²⁶. Discourses do not only create ‘particular ways of representing certain parts of the world’²⁷; they also produce (places for) subjects within the discursive space – *subject-positions* –, from which these certain parts of the world make sense.²⁸

The following parts of this paper review the most important differentiating moments of the discursive field of the journal investigated. The next section focuses on the first and second dimensions of the field as those moments that explain the highest amount of dispersion within the data. After having interpreted them separately, both dimensions are combined, therefore making up the two-dimensional field of the official agrarian discourse. The following section adds a further dimension, therefore creating a three-dimensional discursive field. In the conclusion the central findings of this article are evaluated in the light of the farming styles concept.

²⁴ Norman Fairclough, *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*, London / New York 2003, 124; Joan W. Scott, *Deconstructing equality-versus-difference: Or, the uses of poststructuralist theory for feminism*, in: Diana Tietjens Meyer (ed.), *Feminist social thought: a reader*, New York 1997, 158-770, here 760.

²⁵ See Lawrence Grossberg, *On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall*, in: *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10 (1986) 45-60, here 53: ‘[...] the term has a nice double meaning because articulate means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate. It carries that sense of language-ing, of expressing, etc. But we also speak of an articulated lorry: a lorry where the front (cab) and the back (trailer) can, but need not necessarily, be connected to another. The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage, that can be broken. An articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions.’

²⁶ See Law, *Organizing*.

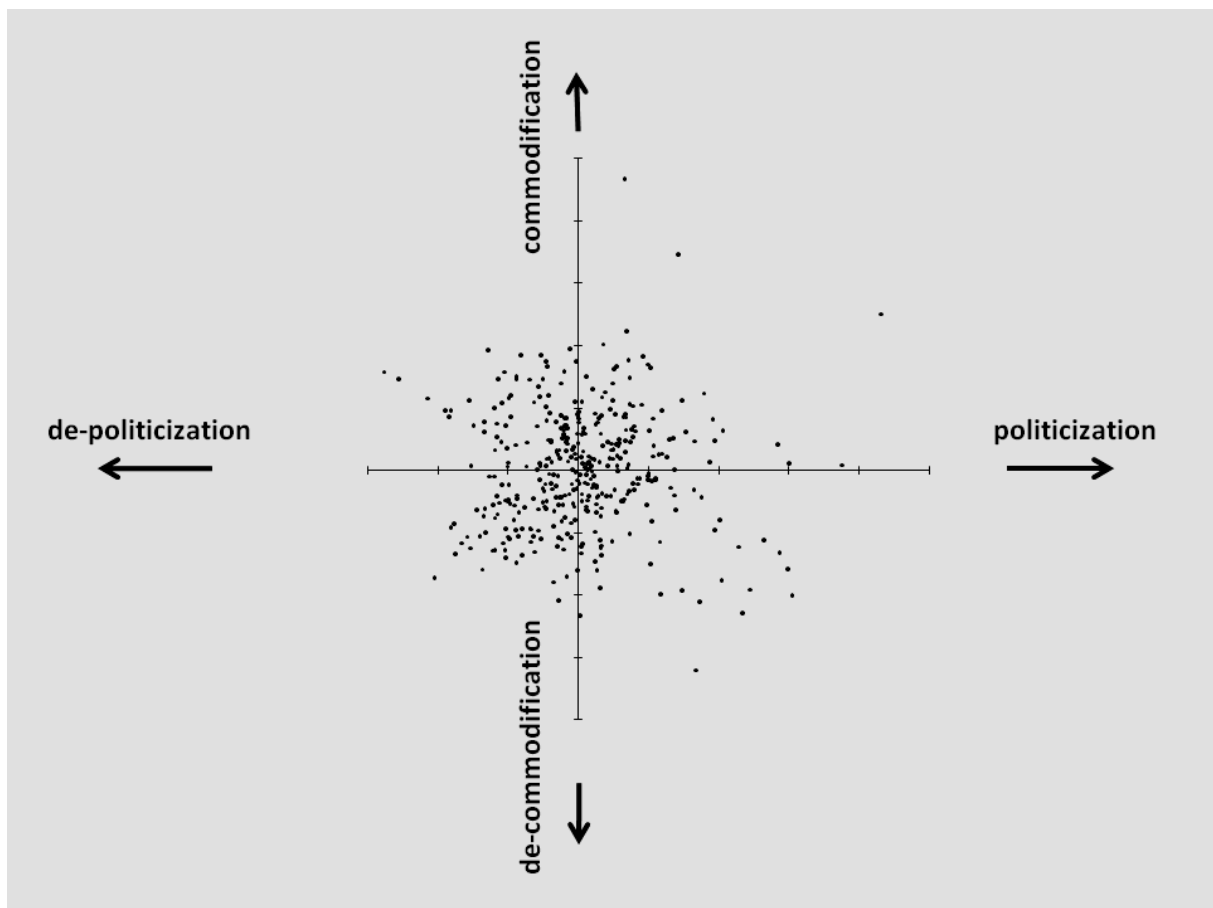
²⁷ Norman Fairclough, *Peripheral Vision: Discourse Analysis in Organization Studies: The Case for Critical Realism*, in: *Organization Studies* 26 (2005), 915-939, here 925.

²⁸ See Stuart Hall, *The Work of Representation*, in: idem (ed.), *Representation. Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, London / Thousand Oaks / New Dehli 1997, 13-74, here 56; Ernesto Laclau / Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemonie und radikale Demokratie. Zur Dekonstruktion des Marxismus*, Vienna 2006, 153.

II. A two-dimensional field: (de-)politisation and (de-)commodification

The first dimension of the discursive field of the journal *Bauernbündler* 1950 to 1981 differentiates discourses by the degree of politicisation (Figure 1). This does not reflect a dichotomy between the political and the apolitical, but rather a spectrum between *politicisation* and *de-politicisation*. This differentiating moment of the discursive field can be considered a gradient between discourses representing political debates and others that evolve outside the political sphere. The discursive order operates as a mechanism of inclusion into and exclusion from the sphere of political intervention. At the same time the ‘political’ as a domain of discourse is defined by that exclusion. The realm of increasing politicisation is characterized by the claim for political engagement.

Figure 1: The main dimensions of the discursive field



Source: MCA of 382 articles from the *Bauernbündler* 1950, 1958, 1969 and 1981.

Statements within this area receive their credibility from their perceived capability to define and influence the public order: the ‘rural exodus’ and its consequences for society; plans to improve market conditions; regulatory actions by the state; social policy matters; the appropriate position of the peasant within society; Austrian agricultural production as compared with other countries; the necessity of a reform of the agricultural education system; the purposes of the cooperative

system; the future of the peasant within industrial society; the ‘nature’ of the Austrian peasant; actions against the work overload of rural women; the meaning of ‘modernity’ etc.²⁹ The perceived capacity to define and influence the public order is fuelled by the tension between politicisation and de-politicisation. The banning of political debate from this realm generates nonnegotiable ‘facts’. Corresponding statements are taken as ‘given reality’. Political opinions are not only absent from here; moreover, they would not make any sense. The following passage can be taken as an example of the constructed pointlessness to challenge statements within this set in a political way:

‘After the occurrence of frost the farmer is often forced to use machines to spread manure. That has, besides several advantages, the disadvantage that the fertilizer does not fall off steadily but here and there by the jarring that occurs while driving. To remedy this problem, we have to attach a resilient pad to the rear tires. Straw suits the best for this purpose, besides it is the cheapest. [...] However, it should be noted, that according to the increase of the wheel size less fertilizer falls down.’³⁰

The dimension of (de-)politicisation involves different subject-positions. In the sphere of *politicisation*, the reader is put into a position where he or she has to be politically concerned about what the articles are about. Within a framework of legitimate opinions, the reader is positioned as a political subject. By awarding political importance to the themes, they are only important in political terms and must be considered according to this. The sphere of *de-politicisation* banishes political debates. Here, statements appear as determined by ‘common sense’, by inevitable constraints, by their ‘natural’ evidence: growing requirements for certain crops; fertility of particular soil types; characteristics of different legumes used for the production of high-protein forage; features and benefits of distinct ways of crop rotation; consequences for cultivation drawn from ‘abnormal’ weather conditions; the pros and cons of various usages of specific mineral fertilisers or plant protection products; indications of spoilage; practicability of new bathroom equipments; proper washing of the guts in order to produce good sausage, etc. The subject of this discourse forfeits its tendency to think in political categories. Though the statements are thoroughly political, they delimitate questioning in political terms by allocating meaning under the pretence of the inevitable.

The dimension of (de-)politicisation involves also different modes of discourse. The realm of de-politicisation is dominated by a specialised discourse that addresses a professional

²⁹ Headings within this discursive realm illustrate the characteristics mentioned above: ‘It is about fairness’, ‘Our farmers can’t bear the risk alone’, ‘The peasant means more than...’, ‘Reasons of the decline of British agriculture’, ‘More knowledge means more bread’, ‘We have a future if we believe in it’, ‘A healthy peasantry inhibits the process of massification’ etc.

³⁰ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 41 (1950), 8.

audience. Within this specialised discourse a differentiated terminology dominates the language used in order to avoid ambiguity. In contrast, the realm of politicisation is organized by inter-discursive linkages³¹ and analogies created by the use of a metaphorical language. This polarisation regarding the mode of discourse goes hand in hand with the newspaper's structure. Two sections separate the sphere of the *political* from its negation: What is considered as politically important appears on the front page or the first three pages. The rear part of the journal presents practical information such as advises, instructions, directives, guidelines and annonces.

This first dimension reflects a range between antagonistic ways politics appear in the texts. On one side, conditions are negotiable within a public arena as a contested field of ideas and visions. Here, the politically engaged reader is subjected to take a reasonable position, i.e. one of conflicting standpoints, according to political principles. In this sphere of politicisation a struggle for trust occurs; and in exchange, those who trust are promised a better future, secured by political power. On the other side of this range, political principles are out of place; In contrast, decisions follow from practical constraints caused by seemingly objective conditions. The objects of discourse are situated within concrete cases. The single farm, situated within tangible circumstances, replaces the notion of the whole of society, mattering within the sphere of politicisation.

The second dimension of the discursive field aligns the journal's statements to a gradient of *(de-)commodification*. Similar to the construction of the political by the first dimension, commodification must not be understood as a pre-defined stable object, but rather as being discursively constructed.³² What is included in commodification emerges as a result of exclusion: the repression of objects unable to be conceived as 'commodities' within this logic. The scale inherent in this dimension classifies discourses according to their relevance for agricultural product markets. At one end every statement deals with 'production' (i.e. commodity production); at the other end statements referring to 'production' are suspended. This gradient describes a

³¹ An inter-discursive formation can be understood as a combination of disparate areas of knowledge. It creates a net of links by symbols, thereby associating distinct social fields and specific practices in order to provide shared meanings, a sort of 'general knowledge'. See Jürgen Link, *Kulturwissenschaft, Interdiskurs, Kulturrevolution*, in: kultuRRevoluTion 45/46 (2003) 10-23; Jürgen Link, *Noch einmal: Diskurs. Interdiskurs. Macht*, in: kultuRRevoluTion 11 (1986) 4-7, 5 f.; Jürgen Link, *Versuch über den Normalismus. Wie Normalität produziert wird*, Opladen 1997, 50; Jacques Guilhaumou, *Geschichte und Sprachwissenschaft – Wege und Stationen (in) der »analyse du discours«*, in: Rainer Keller / Andreas Hirsland / Werner Schneider / Willy Viehöver (eds.), *Handbuch Sozialwissenschaftliche Diskursanalyse*, vol. 2: *Forschungspraxis*, Wiesbaden 2004, 19-65, here 27; Siegfried Jäger, *Kritische Diskursanalyse. Eine Einführung*, Duisburg 2004, 131 f.

³² See Foucault, *Archäologie*, 74.

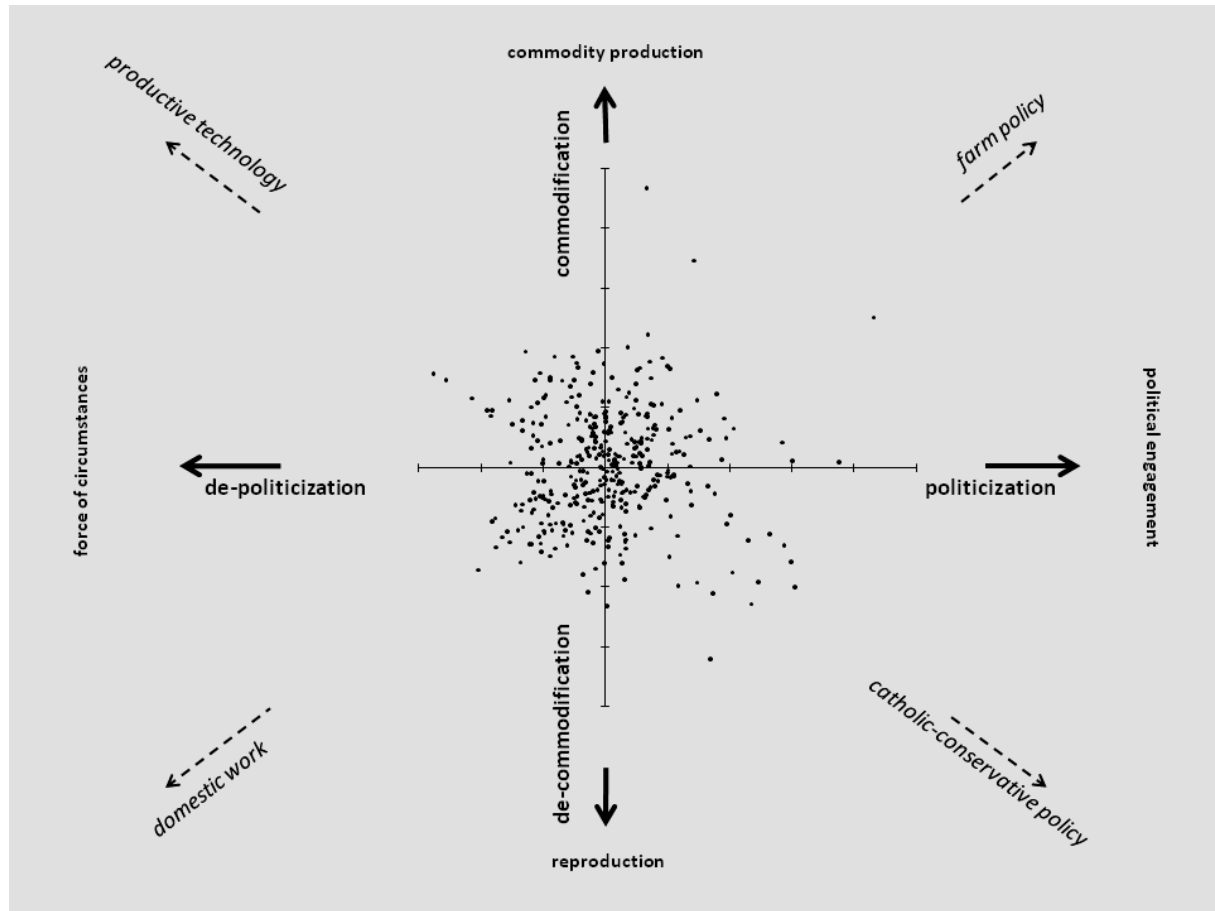
difference between official and informal economy, market and household, commodities and subsistence goods. On one side the objects of discourse are determined by their *exchange-value*. On the other side the objects of discourse are valued according to their capacity to satisfy particular needs of household members, i.e. their *use-value*.

The subjects appearing within the sphere of ‘production’ are obligated to commodity production: This evolves either in a practical context by being subjected to an optimal way of ‘producing’ commodities (growing, breeding, cropping, choosing the seeds, cultivating, feeding, fattening, using machinery, tools and technologies, utilizing products of the agricultural chemistry industry, green manuring, planning, organising, investment etc.); or it evolves in a more abstract way by being subjected to a theoretical knowledge (the economy’s future, the European market, market mechanisms, technological and structural development, the structure of Austrian agriculture etc.), mainly produced by the agronomic ‘expert system’³³ as an interpersonal network linking the Ministry of Agriculture, the Chamber of Agriculture as well as organisations for agricultural research and education. Subject-positions within this sphere receive their standing from their connection with commodities; furthermore, subjects can understand themselves within this linkage. In contrast, subject-positions within the sphere of de-commodification are incapable to understand themselves by applying criteria of ‘production’. All in all, ‘production’ is a limited good within the discursive field of the journal. It is restricted to the realm of commodification, although the realm of de-commodification also includes some kind of – *non-commodity* – production.

Within this realm of de-commodification the discourse focuses on the reproduction of labour power, both biologically and socially: childcare, education, morality, cooking, food, health, hygiene, housecleaning, the storage of foodstuff; preservation measures; but also family relations, religiosity, customs and traditions, village life, living conditions, the rural community, questions of identity, the past and the future, ideals, social risks, emotions and aims in life. In summary, it can be said that all these discourses relate to the ‘peasant household’, the ‘peasant family’ and a ‘peasant way of life’, which they create at the same time. This second dimension differentiates agriculture as commodity production and the sphere of ‘reproduction’, i.e. maintaining the natural and social resource base of farming. The realm of de-commodification is associated with the biological and cultural reproduction of the family as well as the reproductive work within the domestic sphere.

³³ See, Ploeg, *Farmer*, 229-273.

Figure 2: The two-dimensional field of the official agrarian discourse in Lower Austria, 1950–1981



Source: MCA of 382 articles from the *Bauernbündler* 1950, 1958, 1969 and 1981.

By cross combining these two dimensions we obtain four directions, oriented towards the corners of the field of the official agrarian discourse in Lower Austria 1950 to 1981 (Figure 2). These poles can be understood as ideal-types, referring to symbolic positions beyond the realm of empirical data.³⁴ This leads us to uncovering the specific logic of the discursive field – the ‘field effects’³⁵ –, which can be seen as a configuration of relations between positions. The dominant pole of the field in the upper right corner stands for politicised commodity production, i.e. *farm policy* as state regulation of agricultural production. Here agriculture production is considered as amenable to political control, but as reliant on political interventions. Food production appears as a project to secure the welfare of the Austrian ‘people’. Agriculture is defined by its societal relevance and, thus, interpreted as an essential economic sector. The farmer, as producer of

³⁴ See Gisèle Sapiro, *Forms of politicization in the French literary field*, in: *Theory and Society* 32 (2003), 633-652, here 642; Alexander Mejstrik, *Kunstmarkt: Feld als Raum. Die österreichischen Galerien zeitgenössischer Kunst 1991-1993*, in: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 17 (2006), 127-188, here 148 f.

³⁵ See Pierre Bourdieu / Loic J. D. Wacquant, *Reflexive Anthropologie*, Frankfurt am Main 1992, 126 f.; Sapiro, *State*, 446.

marketed food, benefits from trust in the farm policy by the agrarian administration, inasmuch as he gets remunerated for his entrepreneurial effort by receiving prestige. This emphasis is exemplified by articles on credit schemes to support and encourage investments by farmers or risk-minimising institutions like an emergency fund for dairy farming.

The pole in the lower right corner, where the politicised discourses are disconnected from commodification, is orientated towards *catholic-conservative policy* for the peasantry as a particular group of society. This discourse is free from arguments of production; in contrast, it focuses on the essence of the 'peasant man'. More than in other areas of this field a conservative attitude, to which the editors of this newspaper are obliged, is emphasised. This sort of conservatism aims at preserving the peasantry as the 'backbone' of society. It tends to draw the image of an ideal peasant by defining it as the basic essence of human nature. The power of these discourses arises from the supremacy of particular social relationships, especially those within the peasant family, which are connoted with a glorified past and a promising future, sanctioned by God:

'In the course of many hundred years, the fundamental character of our peasant has been shaped. His close connection with nature and its rhythm, his dependency on the forces of nature and the soil he cultivated made him the enduring and tenacious man who is hanging on its soil and knows that he is only an assistant, in the large, annual repetitive nature of the creative process and that prospering ultimately depends on God.'³⁶

The 'peasant' is imagined as the 'fundament of Austrian society and culture':

'The foundations must be preserved! Even in our time a healthy peasantry is the securest foundation of the people, of the state and the economy. Rootage within the home soil – sovereignty within the farmhouse – the growing up of the youth in a real family community – within a unity of living and working. This all ensures the political and economic stability, the independence and neutrality of our country!'³⁷

The pole vis-à-vis in the upper left corner points to a discursive essentialisation of *productive technology*. Following this direction, agricultural production is not politically contested; it becomes its own reason. In place of political arguments, economic and ecological constraints control the discursive range of possibilities. The dominating objective is economic success, i.e. the economic performance of the farm as a well-managed productive unit, equipped with state-of-the-art technology: how to use nitrogen fertiliser in the most effective and economic way, which crops will yield well under particular circumstances, how to do calf fattening economically in order to get the best quality of meat without spending too much milk on it etc.

The dominated pole of the field in the lower left corner is neither consecrated by its value in terms of (commodity) 'production', nor in terms of political advertence. This doubly-exclusion

³⁶ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 24 (1950), 7.

³⁷ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 14 (1958), 1.

from the spheres of market and policy creates the domain of *domestic work*.³⁸ The exclusion from the public sphere makes it a private realm, guided by implicit necessities. The exclusion from the market sphere constitutes a household economy, oriented towards the reproduction of the own resource base. Duties and responsibilities assigned to the subject in this array remain unchallenged by the political-economic debate. This pole of the discursive field is directed towards the efficient maintenance of the domestic sphere, imagined as a closed 'cell of the farm organism'. The subsistence work to be done within this sphere ensures the continuity of the farm, but is not valued as 'farm labour': the watering of the cattle, the need for water pipes in order to preserve the peasant women's health, the preparation of health food, the improve of domestic work, health maintenance, pregnancy and child care, stock care, maintenance of buildings and machines etc. Even where this effort contributes to the economic success of the farm, the discourse denies interpreting it in terms of (commodity) 'production'.

Furthermore, I would like to highlight a hidden dimension in this discursive field. Mostly the discourses rather seem to produce genderless statements; but the upper half of the discursive field, the sphere of 'commodity production', turns out to be an exclusive 'male space'. The subject-positions within this area only comprise appellations entirely addressing 'men': the 'farmer', the 'producer', the 'breeder', the 'grower', the 'entrepreneur' etc. The journal's vocabulary does not make use of female equivalents to these titles.³⁹ Discourses do not provide possible articulations for 'women' with these aspects of agricultural commodity production. However, in the lower right corner of the field, where the 'nature' of the peasant family occupies centre stage, the power to assign gendered roles becomes explicit. Within the discursive construction of the 'peasant lifestyle', 'woman' and 'men' are assigned distinct responsibilities. This construction follows a hierarchical mode of ordering through binary oppositions: 'woman' versus 'man', 'peasant women' versus male 'peasant', 'mother' versus 'father', 'daughter' versus 'son', 'young farmwoman' versus 'young farmer' etc. Thereby, symbolic boundaries within the sphere of the peasant family are indicated. However, the explicit character of these counterparts is not distributed equally. Parallel to the increase of politicisation, corresponding with a shift towards 'public' issues, the female part becomes more and more hidden; there is no female equivalent to the 'mayor', the 'local politician' and, of course, the 'priest' or the 'bishop'. The only place within this field where women are addressed explicitly is the lower left corner. Here,

³⁸ See Gerry Walter / Suzanne Wilson, *Silent Partners: Women in Farm Magazine Success Stories 1934-1991*, in: Rural Sociology 61/2 (1996), 227-248; Wally Secombe, *The Housewife and Her Labour Under Capitalism*, in: New Left Review 83 (1974), 3-24.

³⁹ The farmer (*Landwirt*) and the producer (*Produzent*), which are the dominant positions within this area, do not appear as female farmer (*Landwirtin*) or producer (*Produzentin*) in this journal.

discourses restrict their subjects in a twofold way: by the exclusion from the ‘productive sphere’ and by denying political relevance; hence, ‘female’ subject-positions (e.g. the ‘housewife’) are addressed. This position clarifies how discursive formations perpetuate their power: perceived differences between the sexes⁴⁰ in conjunction with the discursive formation of agriculture, as political and economic subjection, reciprocally legitimate power relations. The articulation of ‘reproduction’ and ‘women’, as a discursive unity,⁴¹ does not only assign ‘reproduction’ to ‘women’; moreover, it also signifies the female by ‘reproduction’. As an effect, farm ‘production’ is construed as a masculine domain.⁴²

III. The third dimension: (dis-)empowerment

Strikingly, this discursive field is relatively stable over time. From 1950 to 1981, the four poles outlined above continue shaping the formative order of the discourse. Despite the change of topics, the substitution of objects and the dis- and re-appearance of concepts, the crucial relations between the positions remain unchanged. This becomes evident in the continuity of the journal’s main departments, though in detail changes occur. However, the relative continuity of the discursive field made up by the first and second dimensions do not necessarily mean that the

⁴⁰ Joan W. Scott, *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis*, in: *The American Historical Review* 91 (1986), 1053-1075, here 1067.

⁴¹ See Grossberg, *Postmodernism*, 53; Scott, *Deconstructing*.

⁴² To grasp this discursive mechanism entirely, we have to keep in mind that the field, besides the possibility to describe distinct areas by their dominant relations, must be understood as space that is constructed by the scope of the dispersion of positions (Foucault, *Réponse* 29: ‘C’est un système réglé de différences et de dispersions.’). Hence, none of the positions can be understood solely. They all produce each other through their relations. At the same time, the ‘female domain’ is constructed within the discursive field defining ‘masculinity’. But this division is also linked with the definition of ‘production’ or the creation of the ‘political’ and its relation to ‘objective knowledge’. And this is connected with perceived ‘practical constraints’ and their definition in contrast to the claimed ‘capacity’ to change conditions, which again is linked with *gender*. In this regard, we can describe crucial aspects of the field by its arrangement of *gender* relations. But without denying that *gender* is a constitutive element of the ‘making’ of ‘agriculture’ as represented within the popular farm press, we have to focus on the interrelations of effective categories that produce differences. By analysing interlinkages between these categories and their mutual dependency, we can understand effects of power within the field of discourses. See Andrea Griesebner / Christina Lutter, *Mehrfach relational: Geschlecht als soziale und analytische Kategorie*, in: *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Geschichte der Neuzeit* 2/4 (2002), 3-5; Andrea Griesebner, *Geschlecht als soziale und als analytische Kategorie. Debatten der letzten drei Jahrzehnte*, in: Johanna Gehmacher / Maria Mesner (eds.), *Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte. Positionen / Perspektiven*, Innsbruck / Vienna / Bozen 2003, 37-52, here 47 ff.

agrarian discourse of the *Bauernbündler* was free of change; indeed, there were considerable changes. In order to explore the temporal order of the official agrarian discourse, we need to look at its third dimension.

The third dimension of the official agrarian discourse, as it is represented in the farmers' journal, is orientated towards the *empowerment* of agriculture within industrial society. It draws a gradient between *relative autonomy* and an increasing pressure to conform to external forces, thereby increasing *dependency*. Along this gradient the relationship of agriculture to state and market changes fundamentally. Agriculture is being transformed from activities on locally and regionally regulated markets towards participation in a state-led market economy.⁴³

The way agriculture can be perceived changes fundamentally along the gradient of (dis-)empowerment. On one side, acting faithfully within the God-given order and a practical knowledge, which provides a sovereign navigation within these circumstances, makes the 'proper peasant': the 'hard-working peasants'⁴⁴ are praised; it is claimed that 'good manure management ensures the farm's success'⁴⁵; the 'peasant' is seen as an 'agent of the necessary technical progress in agriculture, which serves the peace, the reconstruction work and the increase and improve of agricultural production useful to our people'⁴⁶; the 'free peasant ensuring the freedom of our country'⁴⁷ is emphasised; his 'moral attitude'⁴⁸ is acknowledged; it is said that 'neither numbers nor calculations must mean everything to him, he is solely the trustee of the native soil'⁴⁹. On the other side, success is determined by acting according to market conditions and the expertise of the agrarian apparatus: 'Austrian agriculture has once again proved its willingness and ability to

⁴³ This transformation can also be described as the increasing discursive emphasis on a dependency on industrial products (machinery and chemicals), the intensified commercial pressure to maximise profit in a competitive mass market, an amplified obligation to trust bioscience and their products like hybrid seed or antibiotics, the proclaimed need for credit in order to keep up with the accelerated technological progress, the consequent demand to produce crops for cash. It is linked to a restructuring of perception, which in the first place enabled these stated pressures. Therefore, the dimension also describes a shift of general objectives of farming, mainly expressed in terms of economic constraints, and a change of the perceived ideal of lifestyle. See Tim Jenkins, *Bourdieu's Béarnais Ethnography*, in: *Theory, Society & Culture* 34 (2003), 45-72; Pierre Bourdieu, *Junggesellenball. Studien zum Niedergang der bäuerlichen Gesellschaft*, Konstanz 2008, 205-250; James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State. How Certain Schemas to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven 1998.

⁴⁴ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 43 (1969), 5.

⁴⁵ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 33 (1950), 6.

⁴⁶ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 31 (1950), 3.

⁴⁷ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 31 (1950), 3.

⁴⁸ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 5 (1950), 1.

⁴⁹ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 46 (1950), 2.

support the adaptation of production to the needs of the market’;⁵⁰ ‘rewards for cattle husbandry under the condition of the waiver for milk delivery’⁵¹ are demanded; ‘in the longer term the fragmented production of the family farm for a more or less anonymous market results in a lack of livelihood’⁵²; ‘today’s farmer has not only to produce rationally, but also sell rationally’;⁵³ for reasons of profitability, ‘not using concentrated feed amounts to an economical suicide’⁵⁴.

However, the dimension of (dis-)empowerment does not tell the famous story of the disappearance of the closed universe of the traditional village. Though some particles of this narrative can be found in the texts, this is not the key for understanding this dimension. What is important across the entire gradient is the discussion on prices. On one side, the discussion is focussed on the ‘just reward’ for the effort of food production:

‘The peasantry cannot remain deprived of the just reward for being the base of the resurgence of Austria.’⁵⁵ [...] ‘We are proud of the progress of reconstruction, which would have been impossible without the hard-working peasants. Therefore, we also demand for strengthening the economic foundations of our farms fair prices.’⁵⁶

On the other side, this effort is being outweighed by the adjustment to market prices according to ‘efficient’ farm management:

‘The peasants market oriented behaviour brings them better milk prices.’⁵⁷ [...] ‘The economic use of capital in all sectors of agriculture is only secured in the long run, if the produced commodities find a ready market. The problems of outlet cast a pall over all aspects of the production technology, in many cases even over the problems of price, because improvement in producer prices will be difficult to achieve as long as the commodity is produced in abundance.’⁵⁸

The notion of a ‘just reward’ is based on the idea of a moral economy of peasant farming, i.e. a regulatory framework which secures an appropriate level of subsistence for the peasantry.⁵⁹ This moral economy is being eroded in the course of this gradient, leading to the rule of the (politically regulated) ‘market forces’. In short, this dimension of the discursive field describes the move of

⁵⁰ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 3 (1969), 3.

⁵¹ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 27 (1981), 7.

⁵² *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 47 (1969), 3.

⁵³ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 47 (1969), 3.

⁵⁴ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 7 (1969), 2.

⁵⁵ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 36 (1950), 1.

⁵⁶ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 23 (1950), 2.

⁵⁷ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 18 (1969), 1.

⁵⁸ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 7 (1969), 2.

⁵⁹ See James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant. Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*, New Haven/ London 1976.

the peasantry from a *dominant* position into a *dominated* one, between the power to put through a particular peasant point of view and the subordination to other forces with regard to economic performance, political influence and cultural identity.⁶⁰

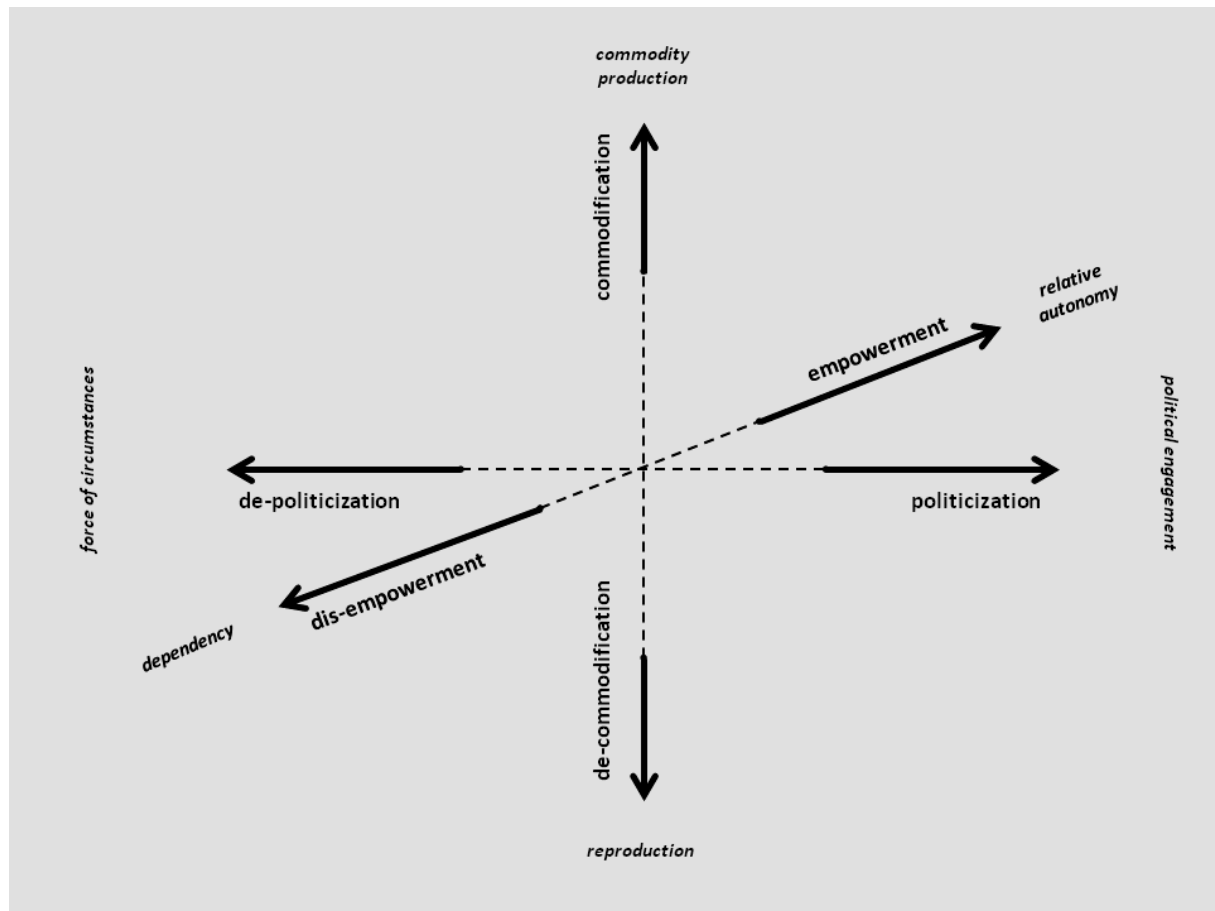
As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the third dimension reflects variations over time within the discursive field. The dimension does not show an accurate time course in the sense of a chronological succession. Even though articles are not lined up precisely along this gradient according to their date of publication, the formation of discourse is transformed over time. Notably, the centres of dispersion of the four volumes of the journal are located in a chronological order along this dimension. The observation that the stray area of the articles of one volume overlaps with those of the articles of other volumes – a kind of asynchrony – does not contradict the chronology of the discursive formation. It rather challenges our conception of time: The asynchronous constellations of articles along this dimension show that discursive changes cannot be regarded as a chronological sequence of 'facts'. On the contrary, we are dealing with the 'simultaneity of the non-simultaneous' (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*)⁶¹. This reflects the way textual data are analysed with aid of MCA. Initially, diachronous data are treated as they were synchronous. In the course of interpretation it turns out that some differences – in our case: the gradient of (dis-)empowerment – involve a temporal order. Therefore, this dimension is not graded by the year of publication, but by agriculture's decreasing potential to maintain autonomy to other societal forces over time. It opens up a 'time-space'⁶², which closely interweaves time with other moments of the agrarian discourse as mediated by the *Bauernbündler*.

⁶⁰ This perfectly describes the range of definitions of the 'peasant' in peasant studies between political-economic subordination (e.g. Eric Wolf, *Peasants*, Englewood Cliffs 1966) and relative autonomy (e.g. Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, *The Peasantries of the Twenty-First Century: the Commoditisation Debate Revisited*, in: *Journal of Peasant Studies* 37 (2010), 1-30).

⁶¹ See Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, Frankfurt am Main 1992, 104.

⁶² See Jon May / Nigel Thrift, *Introduction*, in: idem / idem (eds.), *TimeSpace: Geographies of Temporality*, London et al. 2001, 1-46.

Figure 3: The three-dimensional space of the official agrarian discourse in Lower Austria, 1950–1981



Source: MCA of 382 articles from the *Bauernbündler* 1950, 1958, 1969 and 1981.

By integrating this dimension into the two-dimensional field a three-dimensional space is constructed (Figure 3). This space can be regarded as a relational ‘field-of-force’⁶³, constituted by the dimensions of (de-)politicisation, (de-)commodification and (dis-)empowerment. The introduction of the third dimension differentiates the main directions of the two-dimensional discursive field in the following way: Within the area of *politicised commodification* the third dimension affects the power balance between agriculture and its markets. On one side, the market conditions fit the needs of agriculture. More precisely the task of farm policy is to intervene into the market according to the conditions of agricultural production:

‘Given the importance of agriculture to the community, it seems justified to promote the mechanization from public funds, as long as the industry and the industrial economy are not in a position to supply the machines at affordable prices.’⁶⁴

⁶³ See Edward P. Thompson, *Eighteenth Century English Society: Class Struggle Without Class?*, in: *Social History* 3 (1978), 133-165, here 151.

⁶⁴ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 27 (1950), 6.

On the other side, agricultural has to be restructured in order to succeed on the market: ‘A further adjustment of production to market opportunities is indispensable.’⁶⁵

Within the area of *politicised de-commodification* the third dimension deals with the making of a peasant identity with regard to the constitutive other. On one side, the self is maintained by distinction to the other:

‘Despite the intrusion of the machine and the use of artificial fertilizer, farm work bears personal character. It does allow the rhythm of the creator, it is a piece of the peasants self. The dependence of the seasons and the weather is almost a sacred, as it swells directly from the divine and is not caused by human whims and rules. In contrast to the working class, the peasant stands on his own soil, he is master of his tools and can enjoy the fruits of his hard work first’⁶⁶.

On the other side, the subjects are compelled to perceive themselves according to values set by others:⁶⁷

‘Austrian farm women have averagely four hours of leisure time per day, which is far below the average of other groups.’⁶⁸ [...] ‘What if the labour force of the farmer or his wife fails by prolonged illness or disability? Besides the human suffering, isn’t this in many cases the beginning of economic difficulties? Don’t they need to continue working regardless of health? In this case the others have more security.’⁶⁹ [...] Many of the others don’t know the true working environment on the farm. There are many stereotypes of the farm life. Here the need for clarification by talks and awareness campaigns becomes obvious to increase the image of the peasant.’⁷⁰

Within the area of *depoliticised commodification*, the third dimension distinguishes different frames within which the farmer can succeed. On one side, successful production is achieved by applying practical knowledge and skills to manage the constraints of environmental and social circumstances:

‘Forage cropping is particularly relevant in such areas, where there is a lack of the natural basis for the livestock, like meadows and pastures.’⁷¹ [...] ‘The occasion of harvesting early increases the yield of the stubble crop. That’s one of the reasons why weather is so crucial. If you can grow stubble crop early, you benefit from vigorous growth during summer. We know from experience: one day in July means more profit for the yield, than many days in October.’⁷²

⁶⁵ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 1 (1969), 3.

⁶⁶ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 50 (1950), 3.

⁶⁷ See Bourdieu, *Junggesellenball*, 241-250.

⁶⁸ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 8 (1981), 3.

⁶⁹ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 9 (1981), 4.

⁷⁰ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 9 (1981), 4.

⁷¹ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 11 (1950), 7.

⁷² *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 26 (1950), 6.

On the other side, the newest technology is applied to adjust farm management to technical progress according to market conditions:

‘Due to the reduction of the cow stock, it was possible to keep the milk supply stable, despite the fact that the individual performance increased within the remaining stocks.’⁷³ [...] ‘Disregarding the appeals to convert the cultivation from wheat to feed grain entails a loss of income.’⁷⁴ [...] ‘We have to focus on a high degree of wear, especially within machine-intensive farming, because of the high overhead costs burden.’⁷⁵ [...] ‘We have to leave the conservative paths and come to an entrepreneurial attitude, a business-focused approach, so agriculture can be conducted more on an economic basis.’⁷⁶

Within the area of *depoliticised de-commodification* the third dimension affects the value of reproductive labour. On one side, the discourses offer organisational and practical instructions for managing the work that has to be done more effectively:

‘Proper posture makes work less physically demanding.’⁷⁷ [...] ‘One of the most pleasant tasks of women is to give. To give again and again, not only in material values.’⁷⁸ [...] ‘Work, which the woman is able to provide the best: all the housework, gardening, hand care work for sugar beet and potatoes, assisting the men at the time of harvesting, potato harvest. From the stable work only the cleaning of the milking equipment fits women. All other stable work is transport work, which is real heavy labour.’⁷⁹

On the other side, working effort becomes completely invisible:

‘The preferred colour for basin, bath and toilet is still white, but there are also more expensive models in pastel colours. The most expensive ones, however, are those bathroom items that are decorated with floral decorations.’⁸⁰ [...] ‘There are several ways to spend less time with housework. You can purchase semi-finished good and finished product that allows you spending your time more fruitfully. For example you can buy some foods (like bread or pasta) from the merchant instead of preparing it at home. The same applies to clothing and laundry.’⁸¹ [...] ‘Anyone who feels a little unhappy because of grey hair should tint them. However, the tint should exactly correspond to the natural hair colour. Important is the care of the dyed hair, since they need a special shampoo to be used.’⁸² [...] ‘Also for the sake of beauty: fruit- and vegetable juices!’⁸³

⁷³ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 3 (1969), 3.

⁷⁴ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 11 (1969), 3.

⁷⁵ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 7 (1969), 2

⁷⁶ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 19 (1969), 2.

⁷⁷ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 18 (1958), 4.

⁷⁸ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 51 (1958), 4.

⁷⁹ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 41 (1958), 4.

⁸⁰ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 21 (1969), 4.

⁸¹ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 12 (1958), 4.

⁸² *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 36 (1981), 4.

⁸³ *Der österreichische Bauernbündler* 32 (1981), 4.

The disempowerment eliminates the effort of female domestic work not only in terms of ‘production’, it becomes entirely unmentioned; thereby, the consumist lifestyle of the rural ‘housewife’ as oriented towards the petit-bourgeois ‘housewife’ emerges.⁸⁴

IV. Conclusion

Exploring the discursive space of agriculture provides a framework for analysing symbolic facets of farming styles. It gives us information about how different ways of running a farm in Lower Austria from the 1950s to the 1980s were constructed within the official agrarian discourse. By analysing relations between statements, different discursive formations become apparent. These formations order the correlation of subject-positions, objects, modes of statement, concepts and thematic choices.⁸⁵ On the one hand, this discourse analysis reveals official schemata of classification. On the other hand, it depicts subject-positions within the discursive field, offering different legitimate possibilities of thought and action to the readers of the journal. Moreover, it shows networks of ‘elective affinities’⁸⁶ between subject-positions and other elements of the agrarian universe (means of production, attitudes towards farming, products, rural organizations, market conditions, ecological factors etc.). In short, this study characterises the ‘virtual farmer’⁸⁷ addressing the farmer in real life.

With respect to our research project, this study provides a framework of discourses entangled with farming in the post-war era. In this regard, the findings show that the development of agriculture towards ‘productivism’ is accompanied by a doubly-exclusion. On the one hand, it involves a process of *de-politicisation* of certain positions within the discourses; on the other hand, it restricts ‘production’ to the realm of *commodification*. The former operates by consequent suppression of formative assumptions, therefore creating ‘pure facts’ not to be questioned at another level than that of applicability. The latter construes a discursive realm, where one can speak of ‘production’ by downgrading reproductive activities as being ‘non-productive’. One remarkable finding is the robust character of structural the alignment towards *de-politicisation* and *commodification* over time. Transformations of the discursive construction of ‘agriculture’ over time, as represented by the *Bauernbündler*, occurred only within this excluding

⁸⁴ See Maria Mies, *Subsistenzproduktion, Hausfranisierung, Kolonisierung*, in: Beiträge zur feministischen Theorie und Praxis 9/10 (1983), 115-124.

⁸⁵ See Foucault, *Archäologie*, 48 f.

⁸⁶ Rouanet / Ackermann / Le Roux, *Geometric Analysis*, 6.

⁸⁷ See Ploeg, *Farmer*.

mode of ordering⁸⁸. These transformations describe a shift from a perceived autonomy of a ‘peasant lifestyle’ to a challenged adaptability within a world where the ‘peasant’ has to esteem himself by values not of his own making.⁸⁹

Albeit this paper explains symbolic orders as being inscribed into popular farm press, it cannot answer the question of the role press discourses played for the readers’ lifeworlds. But it indicates a symbolic framework of subject-positions to which the readers of the journal are called to subject themselves. Since the analysis of press discourses cannot reveal how these subject-positions shaped the way farming was practiced by the actors, further investigations are needed in order to identify farming styles. Therefore, for the coming turn of the research project from which this article has evolved, comparative biographical case studies are planned. By aid of oral history, the self-images of people working and living in agriculture from the 1950s to the 1980s shall be explored in order to reveal the extent to which they invested in the subject-positions set by the official agrarian discourse. ‘Thick descriptions’ of biographical cases shall be tied back to the agrosystemic and discursive spaces explored in the preceding turn of the research project, thereby (re-)constructing farming styles in a complex manner.

⁸⁸ See Law, *Organizing*.

⁸⁹ See Bourdieu, *Junggesellenball*, 205-250; Jenkins, *Bèarnais Ethnography*; Ploeg, *Farmer*, 229 ff.